



Hawai'i 'Amakihi

Description: The Hawai'i 'amakihi (*Hemignathus virens*) is a small yellow-green honeycreeper found exclusively on Hawai'i island. The Hawai'i 'amakihi is one of a group of closely related honeycreepers found across the state of Hawaii. The other members, the Maui (nui) 'amakihi, the Kaua'i 'amakihi, and the O'ahu 'amakihi, reside on their namesake islands. The omnivorous 'amakihi feeds on nectar, insects, juices, fruit pulp, and sap from both native and non-native plants and trees. Hawai'i 'amakihi are found across a range of landscapes, from xeric scrubland to rainforest and across an elevational gradient, from sea level to subalpine forest.

Inventories: Forest birds are generally surveyed using a Variable Circular Plot (VCP) method where the observer stops for 8 minutes and listens at stations across a transect. The observer records the number and species of birds detected, and the estimated distance from which they are detected. Another method of surveying birds in unforested areas is the line transect technique whereby the observer records the bird species, distance, and angle to the bird while walking along a transect. In the most recent I&M surveys, Hawai'i 'amakihi were detected in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park on Hawai'i island; Maui 'amakihi were found in Haleakalā National Park on Maui and Kalaupapa National Historical Park on Molokai. Results from these surveys will be published in forthcoming technical reports.

Monitoring: Forest birds are being monitored for species density using the VCP method on preexisting transects. These surveys will take place at 5 parks within the Pacific Island Network: American Memorial Park, Haleakalā National Park, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, Kalaupapa National Park, and the National Park of American Samoa. Vegetation associations will also be documented to correlate habitat management with species abundance. The forest bird counts are a collective effort between NPS, USGS, USFWS, and state agencies. [The Hawaii Forest Bird Interagency Database Program](#) receives and analyzes the data from the surveys.

Data: [The U.S. Geological Survey, Pacific Basin Information Node](#), maintains a list of relevant bird databases, reports, and other products.

Status & Trends: Since the colonization of humans in Hawaii, native birds have suffered a significant decline. The majority of all native species is now extinct. Traditionally, 'amakihi were hunted for feathers, though this did not seem to have a significant effect on the species population. Hawai'i 'amakihi have consistently been the most widespread honeycreeper on Hawai'i island. Presently, the biggest threats to Hawaiian birds are habitat destruction, avian disease, and predators. Predators include feral cats, mongooses, roof rats, barn owls, and the native pueo (short-eared owl). Avian malaria and avian pox, both spread through mosquitoes, cause direct and documented mortality in native honeycreepers, though Hawai'i 'amakihi may be developing some resistance to the diseases. The Hawai'i 'amakihi seems to be increasing in population size in lowland areas.

Management: Habitat protection, including predator control and native plant restoration, benefits not only the 'amakihi but all native birds. Lowland 'ōhi'a forests need considerable protection, as they are quickly disappearing

due to development and alien plant invasion. In addition, removing pigs, which encourage the spread of mosquito borne diseases, has been found to benefit native forests. Furthermore, a massive effort to remove alien plants and outplant native plants on public lands would expand habitat for many native bird species including 'amakihi. By incorporating these and other management guidelines we may once again hear the songs of the 'amakihi commonly echoing through Hawai'i's healthy forests.

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Where to see 'amakihi:

'Amakihi, a beautiful forest bird is predominantly found feeding on 'ōhi'a (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) and māmane (*Sophora chrysophylla*) trees. In HAVO, Hawai'i 'amakihi can usually be seen at 'Āinahou Ranch. The Maui-nui 'amakihi are slightly paler with narrower and darker lores than the Hawai'i subspecies and can be found at Hosmer Grove in Haleakalā NP and lower Waikolu valley in Kalaupapa NHP. All subspecies of 'amakihi have a slightly decurved bill and dark lores. Calls are varied and include an upslurred whistle and a sewing machine like trill, among many others. The Hawai'i 'amakihi can be confused with the endangered Hawai'i creeper, but the creeper has a straighter bill and a descending trill song.



This Hawai'i 'amakihi was caught and released during field work on Hawai'i Island.

Photograph courtesy of Phil Taylor.